

Session 5 The Forerunner Message in Zechariah 1-2

I. THE MAIN THEME IN ZECHARIAH IS THE LORD'S ZEAL FOR JERUSALEM

- A. The book of Zechariah is about Jerusalem. Why should we care about Jerusalem? Because Jesus is zealous for Jerusalem and He will return to live there forever. He has great affection and purpose for this city. We ask the Spirit to teach us what He sees and feels about Jerusalem.

²*"I am zealous for Zion with great zeal...³I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst..."*
(Zech. 8:2-3)

- B. Jesus will rule His worldwide government from Jerusalem, and all nations will be gathered there. God's eternal and end-time purposes are "Jerusalem-centric." Jerusalem is the stage on which the Lord's end-time drama will be played out. Jerusalem is mentioned over 800 times in Scripture and Zion 160 times. Jerusalem will exist forever (2 Chr. 33:4; Ps. 48:8; Joel 3:20; Mic. 4:7).

¹⁷*Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. (Jer. 3:17)*

- C. ***Jerusalem is unique***: Jerusalem is a picture that gives us understanding of how God will deal with the nations. By understanding what the Scripture says about His blessings and judgments on Jerusalem, we understand what He will do in the nations. I refer to a principle that I call "*in like kind, but in lesser degree*." The judgments and glory that God releases on Israel in the Tribulation and the Millennium will be released "*in like kind, but in lesser degree*" on others.

- D. The highlight in the book Zechariah is that Jesus will return and personally live in Jerusalem in the temple. The temple will be the epicenter of His glory that will progressively fill the earth.

- E. Outline of Zechariah

1:1-6 Israel is called to repentance

1:7-6:8 Zechariah received eight visions in one night

6:9-15 The crown given symbolically to Joshua as a prophetic message

7:1-8:23 The questions about fasting and God's blessing on Israel

9:1-14:21 Two prophetic oracles about Israel and her Messiah (Zech. 9-11 and Zech. 12-14)

- F. Zechariah received eight visions in one night (1:7-6:8)

The first vision: The Man on a red warhorse among the myrtle trees (1:7-17)

The second vision: The four horns and four craftsmen (1:18-21)

The third vision: Great blessing coming to Jerusalem (2:1-13)

The fourth vision: The cleansing of Joshua the high priest (3:1-10)

The fifth vision: The lampstand and two olive trees (4:1-14)

The sixth vision: The flying scroll (5:1-4)

The seventh vision: The woman in the basket in Babylon (5:5-11)

The eighth vision: The four chariots (6:1-8)

- G. Zechariah's first three visions are closely related (Zech. 1-2). In the first vision (1:7-17), the Lord promised to restore Jerusalem and the temple. In the second vision (1:18-21), He promised to judge the nations that afflicted Israel. The third vision (2:1-13) developed the themes of Jerusalem being filled with God's glory, prosperity, expansion, and protection.
- H. Zechariah prophesied at the same time as Haggai. It is best to study both books together, because Zechariah elaborated on the truths highlighted by Haggai. There is an important relationship between Haggai's three messages and Zechariah's four. Zechariah's first message was given in *November 520 BC*, three months after Haggai's ministry began in *August 520 BC* (1:1).

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF ZECHARIAH: KNOWING THE STORYLINE

- A. Zechariah was from a priestly family, so he understood much about the priestly office and the temple. He was a young man when God called him to be a prophet (2:4). His family returned from the Babylonian exile in 536 BC (Neh. 12:1-4), when he was a young boy. Zechariah was martyred because of his message—they killed him in the rebuilt temple (Mt. 23:35; Lk. 11:51).
- B. Zechariah's message was given in the aftermath of Israel's greatest national crisis in the Old Testament. Many were taken captive to Babylon to "work camps" for 70 years (606-536 BC). About 50,000 Jewish exiles returned to Jerusalem in 536 BC to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:5). They built its foundation and established musicians and singers (Ezra 3:10-11).
 1. After two years (537-536 BC), they became discouraged and *quit for 16 years* (535-520 BC). The obstacles in Jerusalem included *political opposition* by the Samaritans (Ezra 4:1-5, 24), an *economic crisis* which was intensified by drought and agricultural failure (Hag. 1:1-11), and Israel's fear, compromise, and spiritual lethargy (Hag. 1:1-11; Zech. 1:3-6).
 2. After a delay of 16 years (535-520 BC), God sent prophets to stir the people (Ezra 5:1-2) to begin again to build the temple. After 4 years (520-516 BC), they completed it (Ezra 6:15).
- C. Zechariah's first message was a call to repentance (1:1-3). Repentance is a call to live in agreement with God's leadership. God promised to return to Israel—spiritually and physically—at Jesus' return (1:16; 2:5,10; 8:2; 9:9-10; 14:3-5, 10). The book of Zechariah elaborates on this.

³***Therefore say to them... "Return to Me...and I will return to you"...* (Zech. 1:3)**
- D. Zechariah's forerunner message must be "proclaimed" (1:14). He was to teach on God's zeal. Zechariah 1 highlights four divine emotions—zeal, anger, mercy, and patience. He has *zeal* (1:14; 8:2) and *tender mercy* for Jerusalem (1:12, 16; 7:9; 10:6). He comforts her (1:13, 17) with His glorious plans for her, even after He was *angry* at her for a short time (1:2, 12, 15).

¹⁴***"Proclaim... 'I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with great zeal.'"* (Zech. 1:14)**
- E. Zechariah's second message included *eight visions* that he received on the same night (1:7-6:8). The 24th day of the month of Shebat on today's calendar would have been *February 15, 519 BC* (1:7). This was three months after his first message on repentance given on *November 520 BC* and five months after they returned to work on the temple on *September 22, 520 BC* (Hag. 1:14).

⁷***On the twenty-fourth day of...Shebat, in the second year of Darius [519 BC]...* (Zech. 1:7)**

III. THE FIRST VISION: THE MAN ON A RED HORSE (ZECH. 1:7-17)

- A. Zechariah saw a Man riding a red warhorse among a grove of myrtle trees in a valley, followed by a team of red, sorrel, and white warhorses (1:9). The “Man” was the Angel of the Lord, or the preincarnate Christ (1:12). He described angels riding on horses who patrolled the earth (1:10).
⁸I saw by night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse, and it stood among the myrtle trees in the hollow; and behind him were horses: red, sorrel, and white. ⁹Then I said, “My lord, what are these?” So the angel who talked with me said to me, “I will show you what they are.” ¹⁰And the man who stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, “These are the ones whom the LORD has sent to walk to and fro throughout the earth.” ¹¹So they answered the Angel of the LORD, who stood among the myrtle trees, and said, “We have walked to and fro throughout the earth, and behold, and all the earth is resting quietly.” (Zech. 1:8-11)
- B. There were four persons or groups interacting in this short vision (1:8-11).
1. The prophet Zechariah
2. The Man (1:8, 10) on the red warhorse, who is the Angel of the Lord (1:11-12)
3. The interpreting angel, called “the angel who talked with me” (1:9, 13-14)
4. The patrolling angels on a team of horses following the man (1:8, 10-11)
- C. **Behold a man:** The “Man” who stood among the myrtle trees is mentioned twice (1:8, 10) and the “Angel of Lord” who stood among the myrtle trees is also mentioned twice in this chapter (1:11, 12 cf. 3:1, 5, 6)—they are the same person.
- D. **Angel of the Lord:** The Angel of the Lord is the preincarnate Christ, who also appears in 3:1-6.
- E. **A red horse:** The red warhorse signifies a military conflict. Red, being the color of blood, symbolizes Jesus’ judgment on His enemies. Jesus is followed by angels on heavenly horses.
- F. **Myrtle trees:** This myrtle trees spoke symbolically of Israel. Myrtle trees were common in Israel.
- G. **Stood among the myrtle trees:** The Man standing among the myrtle trees spoke of the Lord being deeply involved with Israel (1:8, 10). Being among them is a guarantee for their safety.
- H. **In the hollow:** Many translate this as in a “valley.” The valley spoke of Israel’s lowly position.
- I. The colors of the warhorses following the Man were red, sorrel (speckled), and white (1:8). The colors probably spoke of their mission. Angelic riders on horses patrolling the earth suggest a military context (1:10). There are horses in the heavenly realm (2 Kgs. 2:11; 6:17; Rev. 19:14).
- J. **The angel who talked with me** (1:9): An interpreting angel talked to Zechariah throughout the night visions to help him understand them (1:9, 13, 14, 19; 2:3; 4:1, 4; 5:5, 10; 6:4).
- K. **Walked to and fro:** Angelic riders patrolled the earth and reported back to the Lord (1:11).
- L. **Resting quietly:** The patrolling angels reported a military reprieve in the region in 520 BC following Persia’s defeat of Babylon in 539 BC. One month earlier in October 520 BC, Haggai prophesied that all the nations would be shaken *before* Israel was fully restored (Hag. 2:6-9).

- M. Jesus, as the Angel of the Lord, prayed for more mercy to be given to Israel (1:12). He interceded for the ending of the effects of the desolation that occurred in the 70 years of trouble (Jer. 25:11-12). Ezra 5-7 describes aspects of the breakthrough that occurred in context to Jesus' prayer.

¹²*The Angel of the LORD answered and said, "O LORD of hosts, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You were angry these seventy years?"*

¹³*The LORD answered the angel who talked to me, with good and comforting words.*
(Zech. 1:12-13)

1. In Ezra 5:3, "at that very time" (when Jesus was interceding 1:12), God shifted the political situation. He removed Persia's oppression from Jerusalem and released financial increase (Ezra 6:6-13). He also released the prophetic ministry of Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1-2).

¹*Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah...prophesied to the Jews...²Zerubbabel...rose up and began to build the house of God [temple]...the prophets of God were...helping them.*

³*At the same time Tattenai the governor [under Persia]...spoke thus to them [negatively]...*

⁵*But the eye of their God was upon...the Jews, so that they could not make them cease till a report could go to Darius. (Ezra 5:1-5)*

2. At that very time, Zechariah prophesied to Zerubbabel that the mountains of opposition would move (4:7)—after that, the Persian King Darius commanded Tattenai, his governor of Samaria and Judah, to stop resisting Israel and to give them financial help (Ezra 6:6-17).

⁶*Therefore, Tattenai...⁷Let the work of this house of God alone...⁸Let the cost be paid... from taxes on the region beyond the River; this is to be given immediately to these men, so that they are not hindered. ⁹And whatever they need...let it be given them day by day...*

¹¹*Whoever alters this edict...let him be hanged...¹³Tattenai...diligently did according to what King Darius had sent...¹⁵The temple was finished [in 516 BC]. (Ezra 6:6-15)*

- N. Zechariah was commissioned with a specific message of comfort to proclaim (1:13-17). This is the first of four prophetic oracles that Zechariah received in context to the eight visions that he received that night (1:14-17; 2:6-13; 4:6-10; 6:9-15). Jerusalem and Zion are synonymous here.

¹³*The Lord answered the [interpreting] angel who talked to me, with good and comforting words.*

¹⁴*So the angel who spoke with me said to me, "Proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with great zeal...¹⁶I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house shall be built in it...a surveyor's line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.'"*

¹⁷*Again proclaim, saying...'My cities shall again spread out through prosperity; the LORD will again comfort Zion and will again choose Jerusalem.'" (Zech. 1:13-17)*

1. **Proclaim:** He was commissioned to proclaim the message of God's zeal for Jerusalem (1:14). The revelation of God's zeal was the core message given to him in 1:14-17.
2. **My cities:** In answer to Jesus' prayer for the cities of Judah (1:12), the Father would cause them to spread out through prosperity (1:17). This was fulfilled in part in Zechariah's generation and even more since 1948. The fullness of this will occur after Jesus returns.
3. **Again choose Jerusalem:** The Lord again chooses Jerusalem (1:17; 2:12; 3:2) to be the epicenter of His global kingdom (Isa. 2:2-4). The Lord told David that He had chosen Jerusalem and told Solomon that He wanted to put His Name there (2 Chr. 6:6, 34-38).

IV. THE SECOND VISION: FOUR HORNS AND FOUR CRAFTSMEN (ZECH. 1:18-21)

- A. Zechariah saw four horns representing the Gentile world powers that scattered Israel (1:18-19). The second vision gives more details about the Lord's message of comfort (1:13, 17). It shows us what God will do to the Gentile world powers with whom He was "exceedingly angry" (1:15).

¹⁸Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were four horns. ¹⁹And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these?" So he answered me, "These are the horns [hostile empires] that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." (Zech. 1:18-19)

- B. **Four horns:** The four horns spoke of four aggressive nations would persecute Israel. Horns are symbolic of power (Ps. 18:2; 22:21; 75:10; 89:17, 24; 92:10; 112:9; 132:17).
- C. **What are these:** Zechariah asked the interpreting angel for understanding of the horns (1:18). The horns are the empires that have scattered Israel (1:19) and gouged them with their horns.
- D. **The four horns:** Most Jewish commentators identify the four kingdoms as Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome—these same four Gentile world powers seen in the four metals of the great statue in Daniel 2:31-45 and also in the vision of the four beast empires in Daniel 7:2-13. Israel's comfort was to be found in the assurance of final deliverance from all Gentiles powers.
- E. Zechariah saw four craftsmen overthrowing the four horn-empires that attacked Israel (1:20-21). The craftsmen were builders with hammers that could easily shatter a brittle ram's horn. These craftsmen were God's tools to destroy evil horn-empires. These four craftsmen may represent the empires used by God to destroy the empire that preceded them (Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45).

²⁰Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen. ²¹And I said, "What are these coming to do?" So he said, "These are the horns that scattered Judah...the craftsmen are coming to terrify them, to cast out the horns of the nations that lifted up their horn against...Judah..." (Zech. 1:20-21)

V. THE THIRD VISION: THE MAN WHO MEASURED JERUSALEM (ZECH. 2:1-5)

- A. Zechariah's third vision was of a Man who measured Jerusalem in preparation for expanding it (2:1-5). This is a vision of Jerusalem being filled with God's glory, prosperity, and protection.

¹I raised my eyes and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. ²So I said, "Where are you going?" And he said to me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length." ³There was the angel who talked with me, going out; and another angel was coming out to meet him, ⁴who said to him, "Run, speak to this young man, saying: 'Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. ⁵For I...will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.'" (Zech. 2:1-5)

- B. **Multitude:** Many Jewish people in the nations will move to Israel in the Millennium.
- C. **Wall of fire:** Jesus will live in Jerusalem (1:16; 2:5, 10) and will defend it. Jesus will establish a wall of fire around the expanded city instead of a physical wall. The wall of fire reminds us of the pillar of fire in the wilderness (Ex. 13:21-22; 14:20; Isa. 4:5).

- D. The Lord called the Jewish exiles still living in Babylon to escape her coming judgment (2:6-7). Babylon was referred to as being in the north because she invaded Israel from the north.
⁶“Up, up! Flee from the land of the north [Babylon],” says the LORD; “for I have spread you abroad like the four winds of heaven,” says the LORD. ⁷“Up, Zion! Escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon.” (Zech. 2:6-7)
- E. ***Flee and escape:*** Babylon had recently been conquered by the Persians. However, more judgment was going to come to Babylon. Therefore, the Lord warned the remaining Jews to flee (2:6) from Babylon and escape the coming trouble. Many stayed in Babylon, thinking it would be easier.
- F. The Lord will judge any nation that plunders Jerusalem (2:8-9). Israel was to flee Babylon (2:7) for the Lord would shake His hand in judgment over her because she had plundered Israel.
⁸...“He sent Me [Jesus] after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye. ⁹For surely I will shake My hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me [Jesus].” (Zech. 2:8-9)
1. ***After glory:*** The Father will send Jesus to the nations which plundered Israel. That is the language He uses through the Gospel of John, “The Father sent Me.” The phrase “after glory” probably refers to the events related to Jesus’ second coming (Mt. 25:31-46).
 2. ***Sent Me:*** Jesus was described as the “sent One” three times in this oracle (2:8, 9, 11) and as the One who will live or dwell in the midst of Jerusalem (2:5, 10, 11).
 3. ***Then you will know:*** Israel will know that the Lord sent Jesus to deliver them from the nations which plundered them. This is clearly a reference to Jesus’ second coming.
- G. The ultimate expression of Israel’s salvation will be in Jesus living in Jerusalem (2:10-13). Jerusalem is to rejoice, instead of remaining discouraged, because the Messiah will one day live in her midst and many nations will worship the God of Israel (2:11) instead of plundering Israel.
¹⁰“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion...I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,” says the LORD. ¹¹“Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. ¹²The LORD will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem. ¹³Be silent, all flesh...for He is aroused from His holy habitation!” (Zech. 2:10-13)
1. ***Sing and rejoice:*** No matter how tough it is to sing and rejoice, the most glorious blessing is coming soon to Jerusalem. In February 519 BC, the remnant of Israel was discouraged. They were suffering a national drought and economic crisis (Hag. 1:6-11).
 2. ***Many nations:*** The Lord will judge (2:9) and bless (2:11) the nations according to their response to Him. Many nations will turn to Him, and their kings will worship Jesus (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Ps. 72:11; 102:15; 138:4; 148:11; Isa. 60:3; 66:8; Amos 9:12; Zeph. 2:11; Zech. 2:11; 8:22; 14:9, 16; Mal. 1:11; Rev. 7:9; 15:4).
 3. ***Holy Land:*** This is the only time that the term “Holy Land” is found in the Bible.